

Kingsport

IV. Visual Image Study Results

Prepared by:

Kathleen L. B. Beine, MD

With:



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Project Background

Mission Statement

The design, layout and construction of a community have significant influence on its quality of life and they impact the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic well being of the citizens. Therefore, a citizen-initiated “Looking at Kingsport 2000: A Visual Image Study©” (VIS) was conducted to assess community preferences for our living environment in order to help develop a long-range strategy for physical improvements in Kingsport.

Rationale

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” Building on this concept, the Visual Image Study is a research and visioning technique in which photographs representing specific planning issues are rated by survey participants. Data are then analyzed and results are reported to the community and its leadership. This technique has been successfully utilized by thousands of communities over the past 20 years, and it is indicative of a nation-wide trend over the past few decades in which public input has increasingly become a key influence in community planning initiatives.

Project Goals

The following project goals were developed at the outset of this project:

- Improve the quality of life for current residents.
- Increase the desirability of Kingsport as a site for investment.
- Forge a consensus community vision for use in our community’s economic development and redevelopment efforts.
- Couple the VIS results and data with prior community visioning efforts.
- Provide recommendations for code and ordinance revisions to reflect community preferences.
- Provide data that will be useful for grant applications.
- Establish a process, equipment and software for future surveys by the City and community organizations.
- Establish a process and model that can be utilized by other area communities and our broader region.

Project Methodology

This project began as a grassroots-led project originated by Dr. Kathleen Beine in conjunction with the Neighborhood Council of Greater Kingsport. Mr. Mark Freeman joined the project and served as co-chair. Later, it became a more broad-based project with additional community partners. Members of the Steering Committee have included: Downtown Kingsport Association, KRIDS (Kingsport’s Resource for Design, Innovation, and Sustainability), City of Kingsport, Eastman Chemical Company, BAE Systems, East Tennessee State University, and Kingsport Tomorrow.

Despite being a grassroots community project, significant effort was exerted in researching the technique, and in developing and refining the survey materials and process. The project’s construction and preliminary data have received very positive review and feedback from local, regional, and national urban design professionals. Recommendations from early pilot focus groups were used to finalize the survey procedure, including: 1) a -5 to +5 rating scale, 2) slide selection and arrangement, and 3) slide presentation manner.

The Visual Image Study was designed as a comprehensive overview of community scenes with a total of 222 slides divided among 15 categories, such as commercial areas, parking, industrial areas, roadways and parks. The slides were comprised of 58% local scenes and 42% non-local scenes, although the origin of images was not disclosed during the survey. Additionally, extensive demographic information was gathered anonymously from each survey participant.

Data collection began on May 23, 2000, and over the next 10 months, quantitative data were gathered from 51 presentations, involving 1,015 participants, ranging from middle school, high school, and university classes, to neighborhoods, civic clubs, church groups, and work sites. Demographics were collected to verify a wide distribution of participants throughout the community, varying educational and socioeconomic backgrounds and varying lifestyle patterns (see VIS Data & Analysis). Survey forms were scanned using an optical software package. The quantitative data underwent preliminary tallying and analysis by Dr.

Project Background (continued)

Richard Zimmerman, with the assistance of the Urban Studies Department and the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at East Tennessee State University.

Using the average rankings for each of the 222 slides contained in the survey, large displays of the results for each of the issue categories were created. These displays were used in focus groups in order to gather more detailed information from citizens pertaining to the 15 categories in which the slides were presented. The focus group process was developed, tested, refined, and conducted by a doctoral class in qualitative research at East Tennessee State University. Then, beginning in February 2001, focus groups were convened to give qualitative input on the slide rating data. A total of 85 persons participated in 14 focus groups, which included one pilot session and 13 formal sessions. One focus group was conducted specifically for developers, architects, engineers, planners, and economic development individuals. Once the focus group sessions were completed, all of the resulting data was then transcribed into nearly 300 pages, and preliminary analysis and review was conducted.

VIS & Focus Group Results

A total of 1,100 participants were involved, including 1,015 who rated images, and 85 who participated in focus groups, representing 2.4% of Kingsport's population. Participants ranged from 12 to 89 years in age, and all socioeconomic levels and geographic areas of the community were represented.

The major data themes can best be described as *Green - Clean - Sidewalks - Parks - Neighborhoods*. The vast majority of participants felt that making Kingsport more visually attractive would result in economic benefits for the community. Overall, citizens' ideas for improving Kingsport included significantly improving walkability for pedestrians, creating parks and green spaces throughout the community, focusing on efforts to revitalize downtown, improving shopping opportunities, increasing entertainment and nightlife offerings, and adding venues to attract youth and young adults, in addition to many other suggestions. Neighborhoods and the quality of life in neighborhoods was especially noted by the 10-18 year-old demographic.

Based upon the results of the VIS and supplemental focus groups, a set of modest suggestions that could be accomplished relatively affordably were created by the City, including: painting buildings, installing or upgrading awnings and/or shutters on buildings, installing and maintaining planters and window boxes, planting street trees, providing attractive street furniture, planting trees, shrubs, and flowers in parking lots, encouraging and supporting community-generated public art, and improving signage.

More substantial and expensive recommended investments, per our citizen participants, included: adding green space throughout the community, significant expansion of the sidewalk network, creating bike lanes, installing statues, fountains, and other outdoor public art, incorporating decorative brick borders in sidewalks throughout the downtown, providing attractive gateways, burying utility lines, replacing unattractive street lights, and improving Kingsport's air and water quality. A more detailed "Planning Recommendations" report is included in this project. For a more comprehensive description of the VIS and process, please see the upcoming book "Looking at Kingsport 2000: A Visual Image Study" by Kathleen Beine, MD.

Detailed Analysis of VIS & Planning Documents

Following the compilation of the survey data, a consultant was hired to perform the following: review all key plans, codes and other public policy; review past visioning efforts; interpret the results of the VIS; develop general planning recommendations; and provide recommendations for revising the existing zoning ordinance and related codes. An analysis of various "demographic slices" was also conducted to identify preference variations among different segments of the community. A tremendous level of consistency for visual preferences was found among all groups, regardless of their age, income, education, and place of residence (see VIS Data & Analysis).

Conclusions

Participants in this project are committed to making their community more attractive to existing and future residents and businesses. They have expressed concerns about the livability and quality of life in

Project Background (continued)

Kingsport, and primary goals include expanding pedestrian facilities, adding and enhancing parks throughout the community, and making improvements to downtown. This project provides valuable information for the City of Kingsport, in addition to builders, developers, private businesses, neighborhoods and community organizations. It will also provide information that will be useful in future grant applications, and it will be beneficial to regional organizations working to enhance the quality of life for the Tri-Cities TN/VA area.

Findings by Issue Categories

Below is a summary of the most basic concepts coming out of the findings for each issue category of the VIS:

Downtown / Commercial / Retail

Most Preferred: Landscaping and green spaces, use of brick, buildings fronting streets, architectural detailing, colorful awnings, good pedestrian access

Least Preferred: Blank building walls, plain buildings lacking detailing, deficient landscaping, poor maintenance, vacant lots, large barren parking lots, utility poles and overhead wiring

Office Buildings

Most Preferred: Architectural variety, masonry and glass, abundant landscaping, well-maintained

Least Preferred: Sterile buildings lacking sufficient windows, large barren parking areas, poorly maintained buildings, utility poles and overhead wiring

Pedestrian Realm

Most Preferred: Well-maintained sidewalks throughout community, sufficient sidewalk width, sidewalk adjacency to buildings or green spaces, street trees, cross walks

Least Preferred: Lack of sidewalks, deteriorated sidewalks, utility poles and overhead wiring, lack of street trees and grassy buffers

Roadways

Most Preferred: Mature street trees, fewer and narrower driving lanes, well-maintained driving surfaces, landscaped medians, adjacent lawns

Least Preferred: Lack of sidewalks, lack of planting strips between sidewalks and street, utility poles and wiring, too many lanes

Street Furniture

Most Preferred: Ornate and traditional looking furnishings, benches designed for aesthetics and comfortable, wood and metal materials

Least Preferred: Cheap materials and design, poor maintenance

Parking

Most Preferred: Extensive landscaping as screening and to break up lot sizes, shade trees, well-maintained paving

Least Preferred: Expansive parking areas, lack of landscaping, poorly maintained paving, utility poles and overhead wiring

Signs / Lines / Towers

Most Preferred: Wood and brick materials, relatively small signs, landscaping around the base of signs, no utility poles, towers or lines

Least Preferred: Billboards, large and tall signs, utility poles and overhead wires, cell towers

Public Art & Decoration

Most Preferred: Art integrated with landscaping and/or architecture, art to disguise blank walls

Least Preferred: Overly abstract art, lack of landscaping

Parks / Green Spaces / Play Areas

Most Preferred: Abundant landscaping, well-maintained paved surfaces, children's play facilities, high-quality streetscape furnishings

Least Preferred: Deficiency of small neighborhood parks, lack of landscaping, poorly maintained furnishings, weeds

Civic & Heritage Buildings

Most Preferred: Kingsport historic landmarks, civic buildings using classical designs, good maintenance, landscaping

Least Preferred: Sterile and utilitarian architectural design, poor maintenance, excessive pavement in foreground

Single-Family Housing

Most Preferred: Varied architectural styles, newer or well-maintained houses, mature street trees

Least Preferred: Utility poles and overhead wiring, older or poorly maintained houses, no landscaping

Findings by Issue Categories (continued)

Multi-Family Housing

Most Preferred: Brick as a dominant building material, varied facade massing, pitched roof, dormers and chimneys

Least Preferred: Repetitious architectural design, insufficient building massing, extensive parking close to housing, lack of landscaping, visible chain link fences with barbed wire

Industry

Most Preferred: Contemporary architectural design, abundant landscaping, large lawns

Least Preferred: Plain and utilitarian looking buildings, insufficient landscaping, visible loading areas and storage, poor maintenance

Vistas

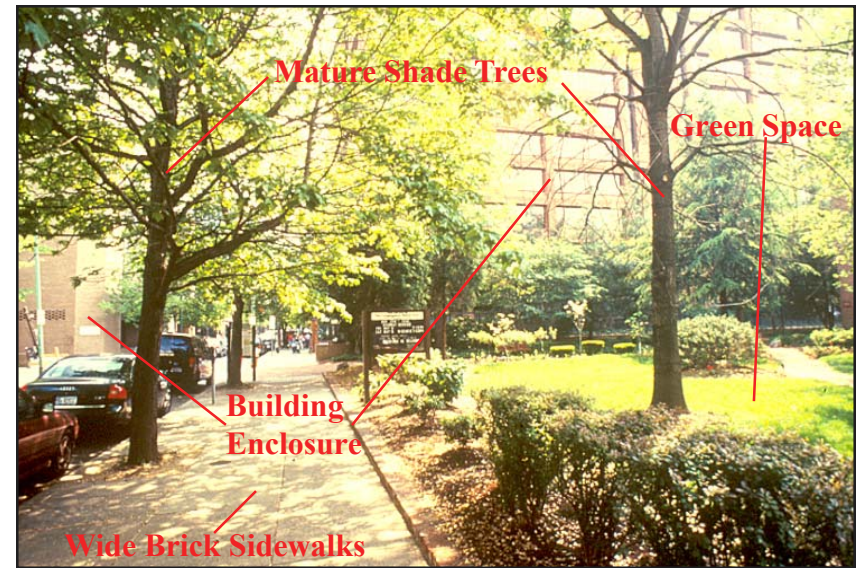
Most Preferred: Little visible development, no alterations to natural topography

Least Preferred: Hilltop development, severe grading of terrain

Transit & Mobility

Most Preferred: Bicycle lanes, handicapped accessibility, buses

Least Preferred: Cyclists and handicapped scooters without bike lanes



Sample Image: Highest rated image in the “Downtown / Commercial / Retail” category.



Sample Image: Lowest rated image in the “Downtown / Commercial / Retail” category.

Downtown / Commercial / Retail: Overview



A review of the VIS results display above for this category, in which rated images have been organized based upon the -5 to +5 rating scale, reveals a clear pattern of preferences related to downtown, commercial and retail development. Among the most dominant characteristics contained in the positively-rated images and negatively-rated images are the following:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Abundant landscaping and green spaces
- ☒ Brick buildings and paved areas
- ☒ Colorful awnings

- ☒ Buildings that relate strongly to their adjacent street
- ☒ Attractive and human-scaled streetscape furnishings
- ☒ Signage appropriately scaled to the associated building
- ☒ Good pedestrian access

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Vacant lots
- ☒ Deteriorated buildings
- ☒ Large barren parking lots
- ☒ Expansive blank walls
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring

Downtown / Commercial / Retail: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.30. This image was the highest rated within this issue category. Key attributes include brick paving and landscaping with buildings framing a public green space.



Mean Rating: +3.29. This image ranked nearly the highest in its category. Among the positive features are the brick paving, attractive landscaping, ornate street light and historic building.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -3.49. Receiving the lowest rating in this category, negative characteristics include deteriorated buildings, poorly maintained sidewalk, utility poles and overhead wiring.



Mean Rating: -3.30. This image also earned a low rating. The key issue is the vacant lot in the foreground, and the steep bank between the sidewalk and street may have also been a factor.

LOWEST

Downtown / Commercial / Retail: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 30 total images / 17 Kingsport images

Subject Range: urban streetscapes, downtown buildings, suburban shopping centers

Ratings Range:

High: +3.30 - heavily landscaped urban park

Low: -3.49 - streetscape of deteriorated buildings with utility poles, overhead wiring and no landscaping

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

Vacant Lots

(71) "...that's what needs to be gotten rid of, if nothing else put grass in there, flowers, something."

Parking Lots

(90) "...I'm surprised that wasn't rated lower than it is. I don't know what it is, but it's sitting in a sea of blacktop."

(84) "...in the shopping center parking lot I would favor... some sort of islands or something... vegetation- even around the lightpoles."

Landscaping / Greenspace

(90) "...to make it more eye appealing they need to have some help, maybe some landscaping."

(87) "...you've got that nice, green open area that you can look out on, you've got little flowers there, and all those trees there. It looks like a really nice place to take a family and relax..."

Outdoor Dining

(78) "I am particularly enamored by #78, that just seems so homey and sociable, good place to be."

(78) "It makes the place seem more alive when there are people on the sidewalk eating or walking or just be able to sit down and just enjoy people watching."

Streetscapes

(75) "I tend to like a little more ornamental fixtures, street fixtures like that... the black light post as opposed to a metal pole that's purely utilitarian..."

(75) "Very clean. Neat, very well designed. Buried utilities - no power

lines."

(79) "You see lines and rows of poles in some places and that is unattractive."

Architecture

(74) "is just a real plain, hard contemporary type that you can't change that much."

(74) "Maybe you could put a mural on #74 to draw attention away from the hardness."

(74) "There's no windows, there's not even a door for a whole half a city block. So improving you need... to pull out the panels there and put displays in the window at the very least so you can feel like you're walking along side something that is meant for you."

(75) "Every time I'm downtown and I pass by that building I think it's so nice because you have buildings on three different sides and in the middle you have like a courtyard with little benches. I think that is so awesome."

Awnings

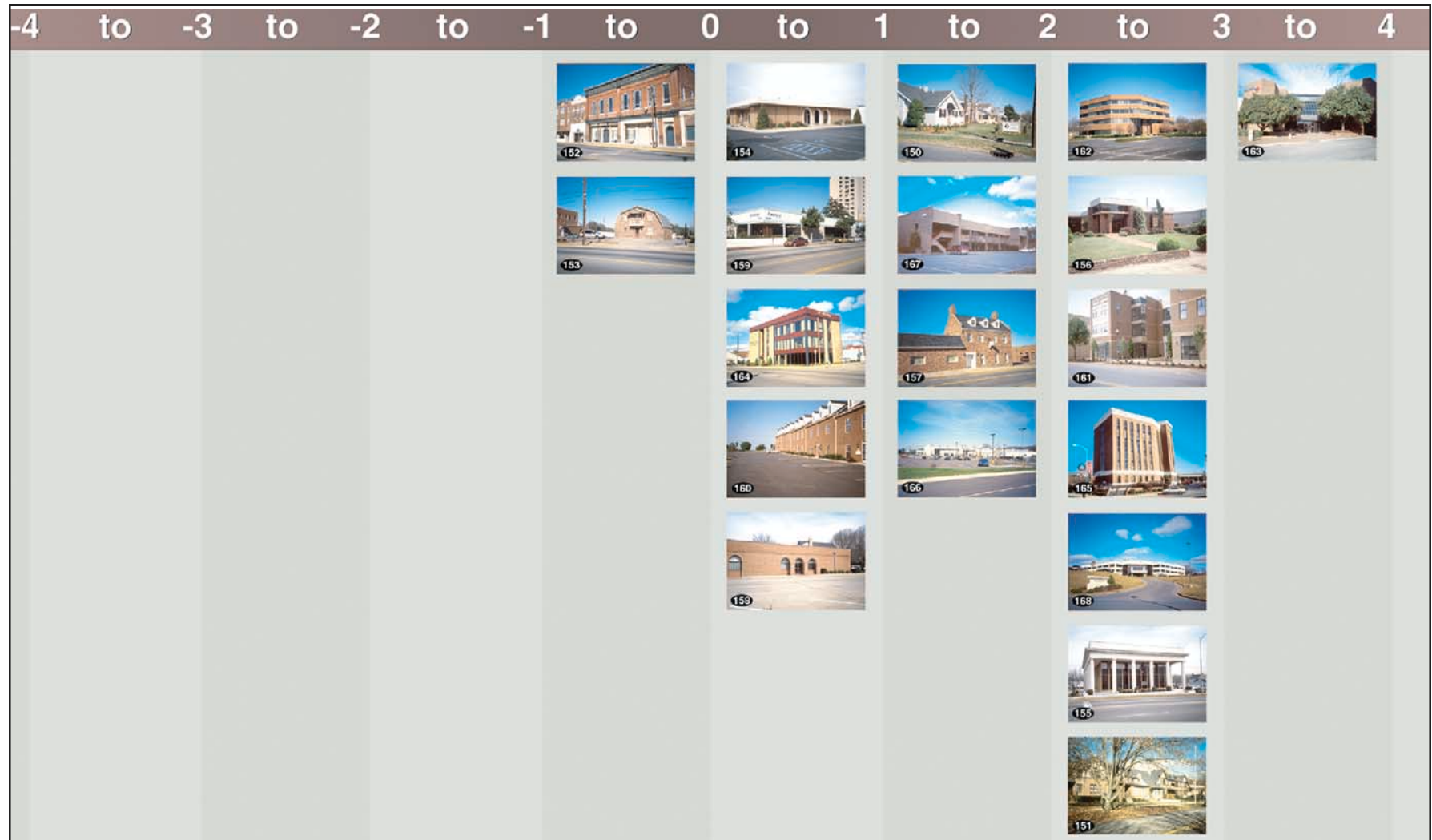
(70) "those green awnings with the white buildings and the red brick; the diversity of color make it jump out at you."

(62) "...the awnings just add that special touch."

Implications for Planning

- Buildings should be architecturally diverse, well-maintained, and have colorful awnings where appropriate
- Streets should not have overhead wiring and should include human scaled streetscape furnishings and outdoor dining
- Parking lots should not visually dominate a site and should be heavily landscaped
- Attractive pedestrian walkways should be provided

Office Buildings: Overview



The VIS results above, in which rated images have been organized based upon the -5 to +5 rating scale, reveals that respondents found most of the images to be acceptable. Although no images were considered excellent, none were disliked significantly. Among the most dominant characteristics identified in these images are the following:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Landscaping
- ☒ Buildings with architectural variety

- ☒ Well-maintained buildings

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Historic building inappropriately altered
- ☒ Buildings lacking interest and detailing
- ☒ Buildings with repetitive and monotonous design
- ☒ Large parking lots
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring

Office Buildings: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.11. This image is the only one in its category that received a rating greater than 3.0. Compared with the other images, it featured more landscaping and brick paving.



Mean Rating: +2.75. Despite the large parking area in the foreground, this image received the second highest rating. The building's design and limited landscaping were well-received.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -0.89. As the lowest rated image in this category, negative features include the utility pole, overhead wiring, asphalt paved foreground, oddly shaped building form, and lack of landscaping.



Mean Rating: -0.34. This image was the only other one receiving a negative rating in this category. Negative features include inappropriate groundfloor alterations to historic buildings and overhead wiring.

LOWEST

Office Buildings: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 19 total images / 14 Kingsport images

Subject Range: large and small commercial/office buildings, urban multi-story, banks/institutional buildings, mixed-use (small business/single-family)

Ratings Range:

High: +3.11 – brick building with heavy landscaping and a brick sidewalk

Low: -0.34 – gambrell-roofed building surrounded by asphalt

General

Although it was not evident based upon the VIS results, the follow-up focus group sessions revealed a strong preference for traditional looking office buildings, rather than solely contemporary designs.

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

Landscaping

(General) “It is pretty obvious what is lower rated, ... have zero or almost zero landscaping.”

(163) “... shows you well-placed trees... do a tremendous amount – if you took those out I think you would take away.”

(157) “... you could have some flower baskets along the window sill. And bring a lot of color into that, it’s so close [to the street] you can’t get much else.”

Architectural Elements

(151) “...I think uniformity took over the building industry, I think it’s a shame. Everything is basically a rectangle and I’m sure that’s the cheapest way to build them, but it’s too bad we don’t have even some things like #151, which is kind of a more unique style.”

(151) “I think that’s one of the nicest streets in town.”

(155) “...I would imagine that it is rated well because it seems to have it’s own character.”

(155) “It definitely stands out around the surrounding areas.”

(164) “If it had some brick or some natural materials I think it would help.”

(160) “...they should put little awnings out there on the windows or shutters...”

(160) “It looks unfinished.”

Compatibility with Residential

(150) “I think this...has done a beautiful job of being consistent with the neighborhood, and I think when they do that I think everyone can profit and it can be very attractive.”

(151) “I think when it’s done right, with a degree of beauty that’s depicted... it becomes a very favorable concept to me.”

(151) “I think it looks great.”

Overhead Utility Lines

(General) “....I think that people would be willing to pay for part of [the costs of burying overhead wiring]... I think it matters to enough people.”

(153) “...needs to have the telephone pole removed.”

Lighting

(152) “It needs a nice light instead of the one that’s there.”

Signage

(150) “I like low mounted signs, as opposed to over the head.”

Implications for Planning

- Buildings should be well landscaped with a variety of trees and shrubs, including evergreens.
- Although the VIS indicated a preference for contemporary architectural styles, office buildings may also have a more traditional architectural character.
- Traditional building materials, particularly brick, should be used.
- Office buildings that are compatibly designed with their surroundings should be considered as part of mixed-use development.
- Lighting and signage should be well-designed and of a human scale.
- Underground utility lines should be used where possible.

Pedestrian Realm: Overview



The VIS results for the Pedestrian Realm category illustrate a broad range of preferences. Many images were either liked or disliked, with a relatively limited number of images receiving more neutral rankings. Among the most prevalent features found in these images are the following:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Well-maintained sidewalks throughout the community
- ☒ Wide sidewalks in more urban areas
- ☒ Concrete sidewalks with some use of decorative brick
- ☒ Street trees

- ☒ Pedestrian crosswalks
- ☒ Sidewalks not separated from buildings by parking lots
- ☒ Wide grassy strip between the sidewalk and street

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Deteriorated sidewalks
- ☒ Lack of sidewalks
- ☒ Lack of street trees
- ☒ Lack of a grassy strip between the sidewalk and street
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring

Pedestrian Realm: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.33. Earning the highest rating for the pedestrian realm category, this image includes new street trees, broad sidewalks with brick accent strips, and interesting storefronts.



Mean Rating: +3.00. This image of a low-density residential area received the second highest rating in its category. It features blooming street trees, wooden fencing and well-maintained sidewalks.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -3.66. Representing the worst of the worst, this image's negative features include a deteriorated sidewalk, chain-link fencing, and a narrow and poorly maintained planting strip.



Mean Rating: -3.35. This image was considered to be the second worst in its category. The lack of a sidewalk and unattractive drainage infrastructure are among its negative features.

LOWEST

Pedestrian Realm: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 20 total images / 11 Kingsport images

Subject Range: sidewalks in a variety of sizes, materials, and conditions; crosswalks; landscaping; adjacent buildings; on-street parking

Ratings Range:

High: +3.33 – wide sidewalks with street trees enclosed by buildings with retail storefronts

Low: -3.66 – sidewalk in a state of disrepair and lined with a chain-link fence

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(43) “There is no safe pedestrian access... You walk down through there and you feel like you’re about to be killed.”

(43) “It needs a sidewalk and safe access.”

(44) “I like that kind of like old style...brick buildings, brick sidewalks....it’s got that four-way stop, you know cars have to stop for pedestrians...that adds a nice old town kind of feeling to it.”

(35) “It has a good sidewalk and a median, tree, and a fence...” “It is very pleasing to the eye.” “..there is a buffer between the sidewalk and the street – a green area. Space is important to make people feel safe walking.”

Sidewalk Width

(50) “... [the sidewalk] is wide enough that if you walk down through there with children, you don’t have to worry about having to grab them and drag them back quickly before they run in the street. You’ve got a little bit of leeway and freedom and comfort to walk down the sidewalk.”

(45) “...seems to be just along the edge of the street so close that you’re just right at the base of the traffic. If you were walking down through there, you could easily step over into the road.”

(48) “Seems to have a good amount of space on both sides of the sidewalk. You’ve got some space between the buildings, and yet some space between the parking there and vegetation which, if it were tighter, it would be kind of claustrophobic and not so favorable, but it’s got a good balance it seems.”

Sidewalk Design

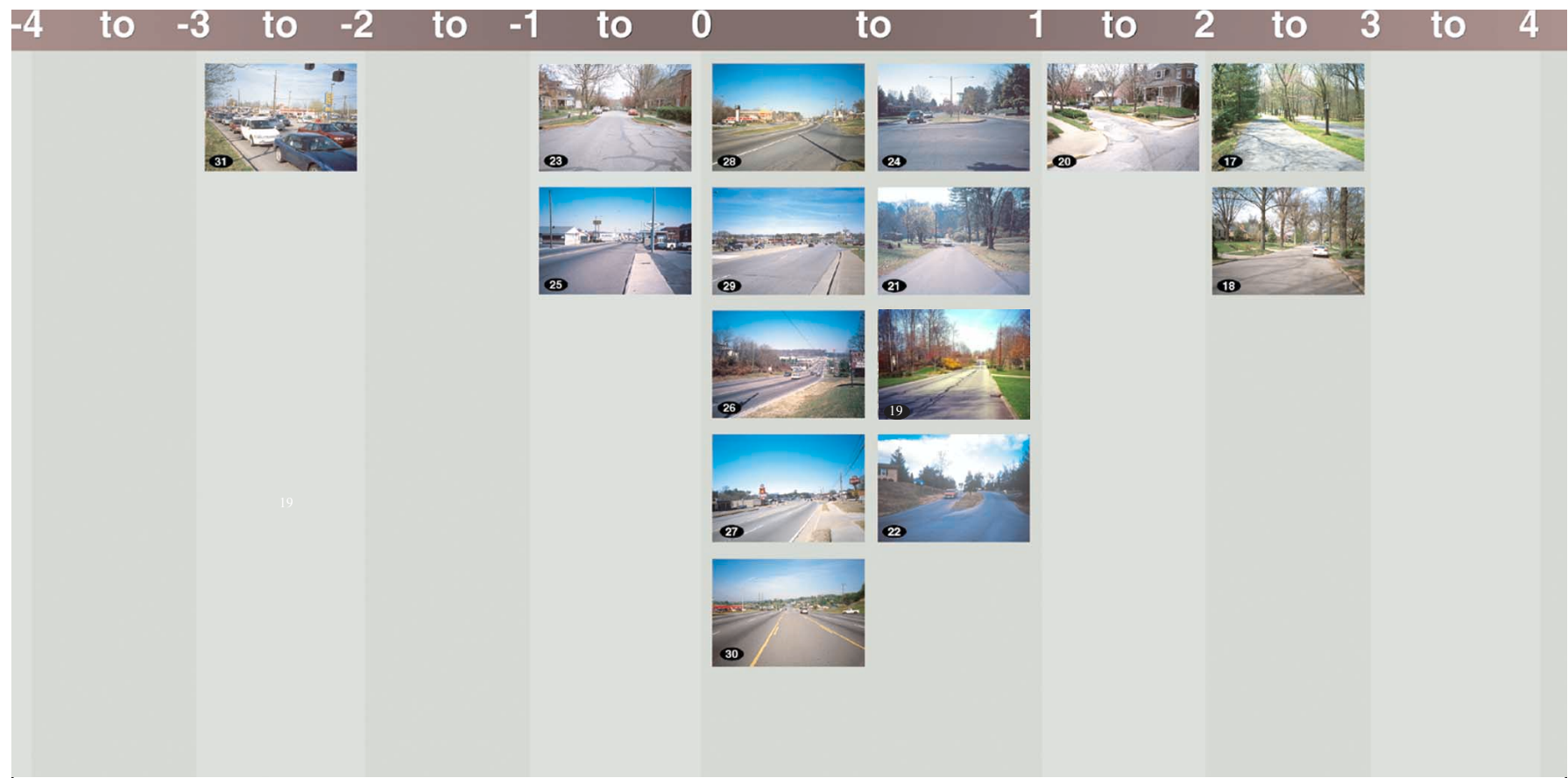
(50) “... [the sidewalk] is really pretty because of the brick contrast it keeps it from looking like cold, cold concrete.”

(46) “I like the brick pavement...That just looks nice. It’s attractive.”

Implications for Planning

- Sidewalks should be provided in all areas of town, perhaps with the exception of industrial areas.
- For high-visibility areas such as commercial areas, incorporate a mixture of materials in sidewalks, such as brick and concrete, to provide more visual interest.
- Pedestrian crosswalks should be included in high traffic areas.
- Sidewalks should be separated from roadways by a landscape buffer, with the possible exception of commercial areas that feature on-street parking and wide sidewalks.
- Sidewalks should be wide enough, particularly in retail areas and near schools.
- Landscaping and trees should be incorporated wherever possible.

Roadways: Overview



The VIS's Roadways category resulted in many more images being considered as positive than negative. In fact, the image receiving by far the lowest rating was based more on a traffic condition than its physical condition. The key features found in these images are the following:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Mature street trees and adjacent green spaces
- ☒ Relatively narrow street widths
- ☒ Fewer driving lanes
- ☒ Sidewalks
- ☒ Landscaped medians
- ☒ Adjacent lawns / green spaces

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Excessively wide streets
- ☒ Traffic congestion
- ☒ Sidewalks not separated from the street by a planting strip
- ☒ Lack of sidewalks
- ☒ Lack of street trees
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring

Roadways: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +2.96. This image received the highest rating in this category. Positive features include the narrow steets, planted median, decorative lighting and extensive vegetation.



Mean Rating: +2.52. As the second most preferred roadway image, its positive characteristics include mature street trees, sidewalks, grassy strip, a relatively narrow pavement width, and on-street parking.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -2.97. Although this lowest rated roadway appears to lack sidewalks and features a strip commercial development pattern, the traffic congestion is likely the main culprit.



Mean Rating: -0.88. Receiving the second lowest rating for roadways, this image has sidewalks directly adjacent to the street, parking lots, utility poles and wiring, tall signage and no landscaping.

LOWEST

Roadways: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 15 total images / 5 Kingsport images

Subject Range: residential streets, commercial highways with 5 lanes and more, one-way streets, narrow urban streets, streets with and without medians

Ratings Range:

High: +2.96 – divided residential street with a green median, mature street trees, and decorative lighting

Low: -2.97 – seven-lane highway with heavy traffic, overhead utility lines, large signs, and strip commercial development

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(17) "...has the antique attractive street lights."

(23) "[it has] Trees, sidewalks, houses further away from the road."

(20) "is appealing because it has a planter. It has the sidewalks with the handicapped access. Not much traffic."

(20) "...you've got some slope, you've got curving. You've got the sidewalk that goes down where the handicapped or someone riding a bicycle or tricycle can get from one side to the other. It's a one-way street and that street's wide enough to park on and pass....that's a nice street."

(25) "It's just really boring to look at I think... it's just road and sidewalk and road."

(30) "I hate a five-lane road with a suicide lane in the middle."

Landscaping

(26) "To me #26 is much more attractive than [other images] in the same category just because it has trees and shrubbery."

(18) "...pleasing with the tree-lined street. It looks like a residential or a historic area."

(18) "...the trees are going across the edge of the road. I think that just looks good to a community."

Landscaped Medians

(17) "... the way they've separated it... makes it look so much prettier

and you feel like less roadway."

(24) "I love that they have medians like...#24."

Implications for Planning

- Try to minimize the number and width of lanes, when possible
- Include street trees and plantings along roadsides and/or in landscaped medians.
- Provide sidewalks with accessibility ramps.
- Consider attractive street lighting.
- Provide left turn lanes integrated into landscaped medians at appropriate locations.

Street Furniture: Overview



Because the implications related to preferences for street furniture are less significant than some of the other planning issues, this VIS category evaluated less than ten images. The results are relatively evenly distributed among those liked and those disliked. Some of the primary characteristics identified in these images are the following:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Human-scaled furnishings
- ☒ Ornate and traditional looking furnishings
- ☒ Traditional high-quality materials, typically wood or metal
- ☒ Seating appears to be comfortable
- ☒ Furniture appears well-located for convenience and safety

- ☒ Shade trees or green space

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Cheap looking bench with advertising
- ☒ Bench lacking a backing
- ☒ Abundant and cluttered looking newspaper racks
- ☒ Garbage can overflowing with trash
- ☒ Poor maintenance

Street Furniture: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.43. The street furniture in this highest-rated image exhibits many positive features, including a traditional and coordinated design, and good condition/maintenance.



Mean Rating: +3.04. As with image #52, these furnishings feature a traditional design, high-quality materials and a thoughtful placement that does not encroach into pedestrian traffic flows.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -3.60. This image was, not surprisingly, by far the lowest rated in this category. Key problems include the excessive trash and unattractive bench and trash receptacle.



Mean Rating: -1.87. Rated as the second lowest image in the category, drawbacks include the cluttered looking newspaper racks and the narrowness created by the landscaping at left.

LOWEST

Street Furniture: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 9 total images / 2 Kingsport images

Subject Range: benches, tables/chairs, lamp posts, trash receptacles, and newspaper racks

Ratings Range:

High: +3.43 – black metal tables and chairs, ornate wooden and cast iron benches, decorative human-scaled street lights, and ornate trash receptacles

Low: -3.60 – plain bench with advertising, utility poles, and overflowing trash container

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(52) "...it's conversational groupings of the furniture instead of a bench here and another bench fifty feet away. It's like a conversational grouping where people can gather."

(53) "A trash receptacle, like (this one) shows you the trash is unattractive as opposed to enclosed trash cans..."

(56) "There needs to be a minimum standard in regards to the placement of newspaper stands. They need to be close the buildings. Location is important. They need to be maintained."

Benches

(52) "...you've got a little bit of architectural style, as compared to the bench in #59."

(53) "Don't like the type of bench... with the billboard type of thing. You see enough advertisement without it being posted just all over the town."

(54) "... benches need to be more like in #54 than in #59. #59 doesn't have arms or a back..."

(54) "I love the way the benches face each other for conversation."

(58) "Metal benches are going to be hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Wood would be better and softer to sit on."

(59) "... the benches... are out of style... You've got the brick. You've got Georgian architecture...and then you've got these ugly 1950s benches."

Implications for Planning

- Street furniture should be selected for function, quality of materials, and design compatibility with the surroundings.
- Traditional looking street furnishings, such as Victorian benches and street lights, are popular.
- Seating should be comfortable and suitable for people of all ages.
- Placement of furniture should encourage social interaction.
- Maintenance of street furnishings, including frequent trash collection, is important.
- Inclusion with shade trees or green space

Parking: Overview



Parking can have one of the greatest impacts upon the visual quality of the built environment. Given that most people find parking areas to be detracting from a place's appearance, it is surprising that most of the VIS images were considered to be positive. Key features identified in these images of parking areas include the following:

Positive Characteristics

- ☑ Extensive landscaping, including shade trees
- ☑ Parking lots that are physically broken up into smaller areas
- ☑ Good condition/maintenance of paved surfaces
- ☑ Clear paint-striping of paved surfaces

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Large, expansive parking lots
- ☒ Lack of landscaping
- ☒ Poorly maintained paved surfaces
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring
- ☒ Parking garages with blank walls and lacking architectural detailing

Parking: Highest & Lowest Ratings



91

Mean Rating: +2.28. As the highest rated image in the parking category, positive features include a relatively small parking area, low shrubs, shade trees and a well-maintained paved surface.



98

Mean Rating: +2.18. This image earned the second highest rating for parking areas. Its assets include a well-maintained paved surface with fresh paint-striping, landscaping and good architecture.

HIGHEST



100

Mean Rating: -1.80. This image rated the lowest in the category. Its stark design, barbed wire, staining along the top, utility poles and overhead wiring are to blame.



92

Mean Rating: -1.48. This image ranked the lowest among parking lots. Negative features include the lot's expansiveness, the lack of landscaping, tall lighting, and the utility poles and wiring.

LOWEST

Parking: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 11 total images / 5 Kingsport images

Subject Range: Parking lots of various sizes, varying levels of landscaping, two parking garages

Ratings Range:

High: +2.28 – Parking lot beside an office building with shrubs and shade trees between the lot and the adjacent sidewalk and street.

Low: -1.80 – Concrete parking garage with chain-link fence and barbed wire on top deck with rust stains running down the side of the building.

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(93) “You also want to have well-lit and somewhat observable parking.”

Size

(98) “First thing that struck me is it’s small... A small parking lot, as opposed to several acres of nothing but blacktop.”

(99) “Parking lots are too big for the stores they are serving. Why are they built that big in the first place?”

Landscaping

(93) “That’s the good thing about it — you can’t see the cars.”

(93) “...that’s perfect, there’s parking in there, and I don’t have to look at it... the pedestrians are walking around along the sidewalk, and they’ve got the enjoyment of all the green, but the parking is right there.”

(93) “I think what we’re saying, we like borders around those things, I don’t care if it’s a building or a parking lot...that would take away from seeing so much blacktop.”

(91) “The property owner embellished it a lot with plants and living things, which takes away the hardness of concrete and asphalt.”

(101) “I think it’s about right for parking, they could do a better job landscaping.”

Materials

(General) “... red brick as a flat surface for parking upon... things like that gives it some added texture and makes it more interesting.”

(101) “The brick work has a nice texture.”

Maintenance

(100) “I think that would be an attractive place if they’d just paint it.”

(100) “...it’s unkempt, it’s uncared for, and when something’s uncared for, you think that they don’t care enough to maintain it.”

(101) “So many parking garages just look like dumps. #101 is well landscaped and well maintained.”

Implications for Planning

- Parking areas should be observable and well lit for safety.
- Parking garages should be considered where possible as an alternative to vast surface parking areas, but they should be well-designed.
- Parking areas should have landscape screens to obscure them from streets.
- Landscaping should be used to break up large expanses of asphalt.
- Encourage planting of shade trees
- Maintenance standards or incentives should be considered.

Signs / Lines / Towers: Overview



While signs can be scaled and designed to be attractive, overhead lines and cell towers are almost always inherently unattractive. This VIS issue category lumps all three issues together. Although two of the sign images came out on the positive side of the rankings, the other six images did not. Below is a summary of the positive and negative features of these images:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ High-quality sign materials - wood and brick
- ☒ Signs that are not excessively large
- ☒ Limited landscaping integrated with signage bases
- ☒ Underground utilities

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Extremely large and tall shopping center signage
- ☒ Off-premise billboards
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring
- ☒ Cell tower rising far above the landscape

Signs / Lines / Towers: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +2.99. Although this sign is relatively large for the scale of its associated development, it received a high rating because of its brick materials and minimal landscaping at its base.

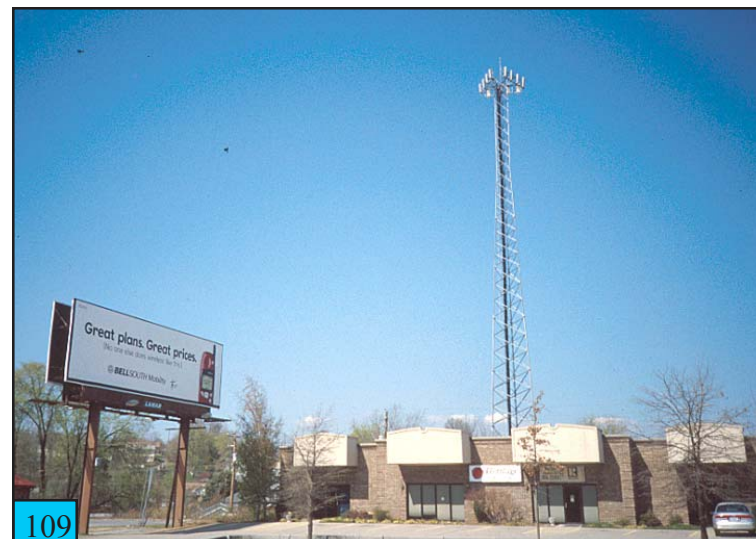


Mean Rating: +1.65. As the only other positively rated image in this category, this sign exhibits a relatively human scale, creative design and wooden materials.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -2.23. This image received the lowest rating in this category because of the billboard, utility pole, overhead wiring, unattractive parking lot and unscreened dumpsters.



Mean Rating: -1.25. This image also received a low rating. While it does not feature the same quantity of unattractive features as image #105, the billboard and cell tower suffice.

LOWEST

Signs / Lines / Towers: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 8 total images / 5 Kingsport images

Subject Range: commercial signage, billboards, power lines, cell towers

Ratings Range:

High: +2.99 – brick and wood commercial sign on a brick/concrete base

Low: -2.23 – billboards and overhead wiring

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

On-Premise Signs

(104) “...that’s more sign than is necessary, but it is attractive and placed well.”

(104) “...is a classical example of an attractive sign.”

(104) “...the use of natural materials in signage makes a big difference.”

(104) “...I like the flowers in front, I like the brick look, the natural look. I like the height of it... and it could even be lower too.”

(103) “... is kind of... outdated, but it kind of screams ‘this is not a new place.’”

(103) “Very unattractive, very large. No redeeming features.”

(102) “... if they took it off the poles... and set it on the ground it would look better.”

(106) “... is unique and eye-catching, kind of cute.”

(106) “Small is better, always! Smaller square footage and closer to the ground.”

Billboards

(105) “... you’ve got this mishmash of billboards, looks like... stuff that looks pretty messy and unattractive...”

Implications for Planning

- Signs should use traditional high-quality materials, such as brick and wood.
- Signs should be low to the ground and sized appropriate to their location.
- Landscaping should be incorporated with signage.

- Existing billboards should be eliminated, and new ones prohibited.
- Cell towers should be masked by innovative installation locations.
- All utilities should be located underground.

Public Art & Decoration: Overview



Given the subject matter of this VIS category, it is not surprising that only three of the 14 images received a negative rating. The only three negatively rated images were those in which the art or decoration was poorly executed and of questionable artistic merit. Below is a summary of the VIS results:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Art integrated with abundant landscaping
- ☒ Art integrated with architecture
- ☒ Art used to mask a blank wall
- ☒ Use of statues, fountains, murals, stenciling, and plantings

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Abstract art with an unattractive setting
- ☒ Utilitarian looking public telephone needing landscaping

Public Art & Decoration: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.64. This highly-rated image's key positive features include a preserved hillside, lush landscaping, decorative tile work, and a fountain.



Mean Rating: +2.85. As the second highest rated image in the category, appealing characteristics include the brick tile paving, blooming plantings, iron hand rail and architectural decoration.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -2.25. This public telephone appears functional but is unattractive. Both sides of it are begging for landscaping to enhance its setting.



Mean Rating: -0.71. This abstract art creatively frames the existing fire escape. Consistent with the adage "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," its rating could have gone either way.

LOWEST

Public Art & Decoration: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 14 total images / 5 Kingsport images

Subject Range: landscaping beds, decorative handrails, planters, arbors, memorials, sculptures, contemporary art, murals, fountains

Ratings Range:

High: +3.64 – Lavish landscaping, fountain, decorative walkways of terra cotta and tile, and use of hilly topography as an integral part of building design.

Low: -2.25 – Public telephone with bare ground and dead shrubbery surrounding it.

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

(212) “I want to live [here].”

(212) “... it looks warm and friendly and bubbling water and smelling the flowers...”

(216) “I particularly like 216... [the] small business here has made just tiny little gardens in the front.”

(216) “It makes the entrance very pleasing.”

(216) “... very little space there between the sidewalk and the building, but they have made good use of it.”

(207) “Just two potted plants out front makes an impact.”

(214) “An urn hanging on the wall with some greenery in it... what they’ve done with this here - you’d normally have a bare wall”

(203) “...looks nice because of all the green and grass that is present.”

(204) “(this) is a credit to the owner for breaking up the wall with art.”

(204) “I like the way it incorporated unnecessary things. The fire escape, I mean they had to have that fire escape and yet they pulled it in and worked off it.”

(211) “...clever. It looks like a transformer box ...with something stenciled on the side.”

(211) “That’s very nice.”

(206) “I kind of like the artwork in 206.”

(206) “[It] is very attractive. It looks like Disney Land almost.”

Implications for Planning

- Look for opportunities to creatively integrate art with landscaping and/or architecture.
- Consider water features as focal points.
- Utilize art in the form of sculpture and murals to enhance blank walls, particularly in downtown areas where pedestrians are more prevalent.

Parks / Green Spaces / Play Areas: Overview



As in the case of public art and decoration, this category of planning issues is inherently positive in the eyes of most people. Consequently, the vast majority of images received a positive rating. Below is a summary of the results:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Lush and mature landscaping, including shade trees
- ☒ Well-maintained paved pedestrian surfaces
- ☒ Functional and safe play facilities for children
- ☒ Decorative and human-scaled streetscape furnishings
- ☒ Greenbelt linear park

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Lack of pedestrian facilities
- ☒ Lack of landscaping
- ☒ Chain-link fencing
- ☒ Lack of downtown green spaces
- ☒ Lack of neighborhood parks

Parks / Green Spaces / Play Areas: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.60. This image received the highest ranking of all images in this category. The colorful plantings clearly gave it the edge, as well as the pedestrian pathway's curved lines.



Mean Rating: +3.34. The mature trees and expansive green space dominate this image. Other features include a well-maintained paved surface and attractive streetscape furnishings.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -2.13. Characteristics of this lowest rated image are a lack of neighborhood play area, sidewalks, and landscaping, and the presence of utility poles and overhead wiring.



Mean Rating: -0.61. Elements that gave this image a low rating are the chain-link fence and lack of seating and landscaping. Overhead wiring can also be seen in the distant background.

LOWEST

Parks / Green Spaces / Play Areas: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 16 total images / 8 Kingsport images

Subject Range: urban parks, residential parks, sports fields, track, public fountains, small courtyard spaces, playgrounds

Ratings Range:

High: +3.60 – Park with wide pathways, berms, terraces, lush landscaping colorful flowers, fountain, buildings in background

Low: -2.13 – Children playing in a street near modest-scaled single-family homes

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(16) "... its got everything – its got the benches, its got the groundcover, its got underground utilities for the lighting, the trees, the open air effect as well as the pavement. Its beautiful."

(16) "Looks like a place you could relax while you are shopping."

(16) "Multiple age groups can use it."

(11) "It would be nice to have that fountain... But to have it in an area like that isn't very attractive. It would be more attractive if it was in an area with flowers and grass and actual trees."

(15) "is pretty much the standard of the kinds of things you don't want to see. No trees, kids out in the road, confusion going on."

(15) "... you've got a residential street and little kids playing in the street on their little bikes and stuff, there's no sidewalks... it doesn't work from a pedestrian standpoint, from a safety standpoint. Sidewalks are a big deal."

(6) "... when you put up a fence, then that puts a barrier up and it doesn't seem to be very inviting."

(4) "I like the integration of #4 the way the sidewalk penetrates the green space. Instead of perpendicular it's got some curving to it and it goes in and out of the trees..."

(14) "... looks inviting, like you'd want to walk into it."

(14) "... in older areas of downtown where you have these lots or buildings that are not being maintained – tear them down and put in a little mini-park like that with flowers – that's just gorgeous and inviting and it says the community cares.....they've done something constructive with these

old abandoned neglected lots, instead of broken glass and bottles and stuff; that's much better."

Landscaping

(7) "I like #7 a lot, the different levels and combinations of landscapes there."

(16) "I especially like the fact that there is seating in a shady area...people like to have a place to sit where they can be in the shade – especially with older people."

(11) "... it could be more inviting with some trees or more than something besides the flatness of the pavement."

(10) "What I'm looking for in green spaces and parks is the coolness of the trees and foliage. That you've got to have shade."

(14) "There are separate areas...broken up with landscaping."

Furnishings

(10) "... there's no benches there — so people can't sit down.

(1) "... some benches would help... something to give people the opportunity to sit down."

(6) "... with the playground, there's nothing around it. I don't see a place for sitting."

Maintenance

(9) "You see there's sidewalks, there's a lot of green and parks, there are trash cans that are maintained, there's not a lot of trash around them. That's important for an area to look cared for..."

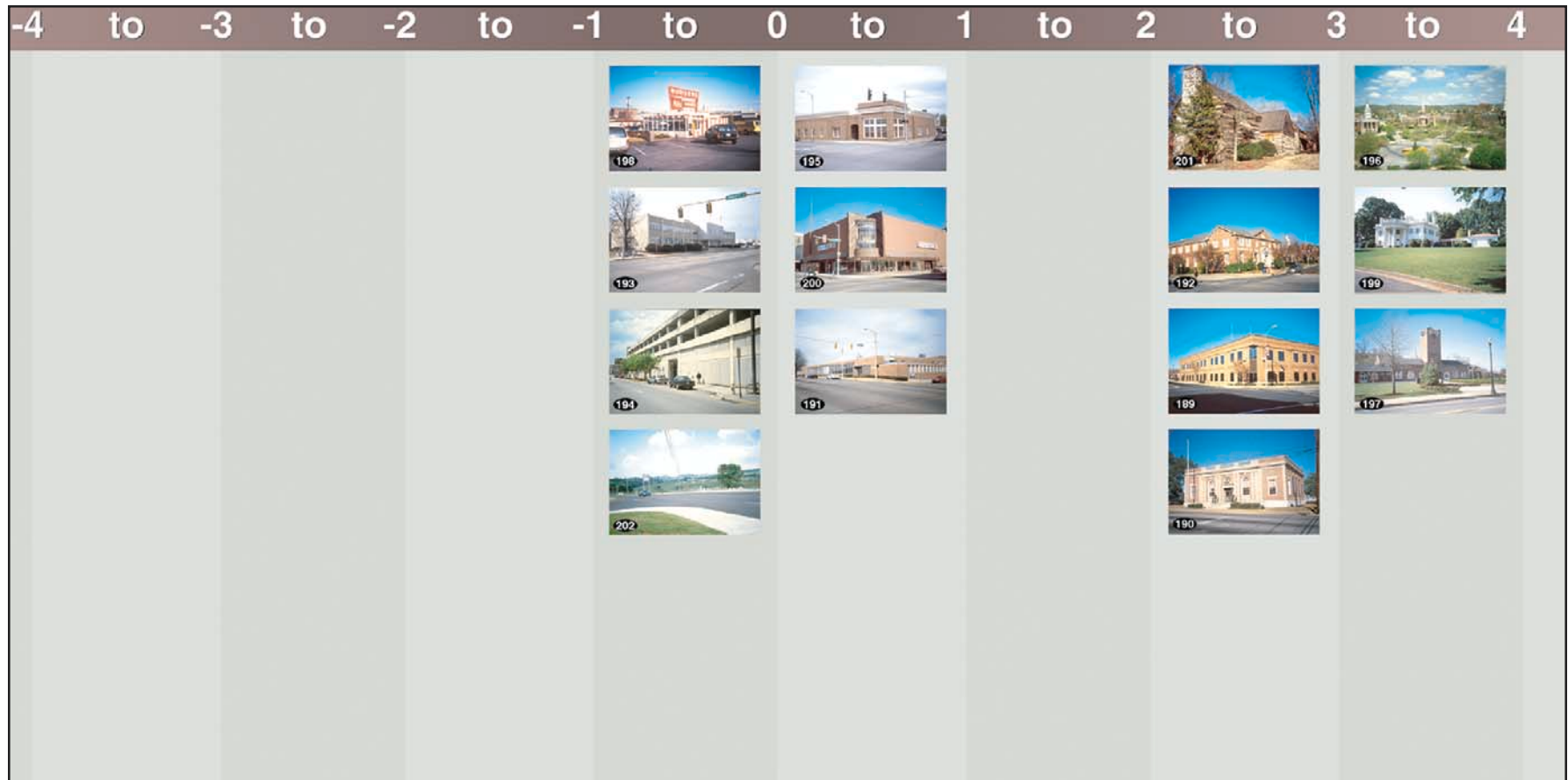
(9) "... looks very well kept. You don't see litter. It's lush. It looks like a place for families to sit down and have a picnic."

(4) "... looks neat and inviting."

Implications for Planning

- Parks should have lush landscaping, including mature trees.
- Safe, accessible play facilities should be incorporated.
- Benches, trash receptacles, water fountains, restrooms and other appropriate furnishings should be provided.
- Walkways should be wide and inviting.
- Maintenance is important to keep up appearances.
- More downtown and neighborhood parks are needed.

Civic & Heritage Buildings: Overview



In general, the images in the Civic and Heritage Buildings category received either a neutral rating or a high rating. The most historic buildings received the highest ratings. The fact that most of the historic buildings were cherished landmarks in Kingsport unquestionably impacted their ratings. Well-designed civic buildings were also higher rated.

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Local historic landmarks
- ☒ Brick and wood materials
- ☒ Good building conditions/maintenance
- ☒ Attractive landscaping

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Utilitarian and sterile architectural design
- ☒ Extensive asphalt paving in foreground
- ☒ Minimal landscaping
- ☒ Large signage and tall “cobra head” street lights
- ☒ Overhead wiring and utilities
- ☒ Large streets immediately adjacent to cemeteries without visual buffering

Civic & Heritage Buildings: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.92. Church Circle was the highest rated in this category. It is a landmark featured in local postcards and it is unique to Kingsport.



Mean Rating: +3.91. Coming in as a close second, Allandale is another historic landmark for Kingsport. Even without the attractive landscaping it would likely have received high marks.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -0.81. This image of a historic cemetery received the lowest rating. Features include excessive pavement, a lack of landscaping buffering from the road, and overhead wiring.



Mean Rating: -0.58. As the lowest rated civic building, this combination office and parking structure presents a blank wall at the ground floor and emphasizes utility over aesthetics.

LOWEST

Civic & Heritage Buildings: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 14 total images / 10 Kingsport images

Subject Range: retail buildings, office buildings, churches, governmental buildings, historic sites, combination office/parking structure, cemetery

Ratings Range:

High: +3.92 – Kingsport’s Church Circle

Low: -0.81 – Cemetery adjacent to highway

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(General) “Use of brick as a natural material appears to be thought very highly of.”

(198) “We miss, a lot of time, the importance of the designs of those little unique businesses. You may not like them and that’s ok, but they still have an impact that you may not realize.”

Civic Buildings

(197, 192) “... examples of some really pretty historic buildings that have been taken care of.”

(192) “... is one of the most beautiful libraries I’ve ever seen... with the trees around it and the type of architecture it is.”

(193) “The city could do a great deal for downtown if they would get rid of that City Hall and build a decent building there.”

(193) “Build a City Hall that matches the other historic sites. Go back to architecture of the original center of the city.”

(191, 193) “I think one of the problems is in #191 and #193 are the buildings’ lines, everything is just straight, you know, there’s no interest there.”

(191, 193) “[they] are just 1960s architecture. Built as cheaply as possible.”

(190) “... is just a fabulous building... because of the architecture. It has a classic architectural style.”

Landscaping

(192) “...it is always well maintained. Not a lot of landscaping, but it has not been allowed to be run down.”

(195) “is an attractive building, I agree, greenery would help a lot.”

Church Circle

(196) “I mean it’s picturesque. That is as beautiful as any place you will find.”

(196) “I think that #196 represents so many more things than just architecture and is a reflection of the Bible belt and the southern style.”

Historic Railroad Station

(197) “... [it] could still use some landscaping, but it is well done.”

(197) “I like it because when they remodeled it they kept its old lines.”

(197) “I think this is a beautiful example of what our city is doing to improve the downtown area and the beauty of it.”

Implications for Planning

- New civic buildings should emulate the architectural designs and materials of Kingsport’s cherished historic landmarks.
- Take actions to ensure that Kingsport’s key historic buildings are preserved and maintained for the future.
- Measures should be taken to even further enhance key landmarks such as the Church Circle and historic railroad station.
- Landscaping is a useful element to enhance buildings.

Single-Family Housing: Overview



Given that the majority of Kingsport's developed land consists of single-family development, this is an important VIS category. Rather than focusing on individual houses, the images used for this category focus more on the overall development character of residential areas as viewed from the street. Ten of this category's 11 images received a positive rating, including the following results:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Traditionally designed houses
- ☒ Well-maintained houses
- ☒ Variety of neighborhood development patterns
- ☒ Mature street trees and sidewalks

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring
- ☒ Garage door dominance
- ☒ Poorly maintained neighborhoods
- ☒ Lack of street trees
- ☒ Lack of sidewalks
- ☒ Lack of neighborhood parks

Single-Family Housing: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +3.31. This image received the highest rating among single-family housing images because of the open and somewhat rural character of the scene.



Mean Rating: +3.22. While this street lacks sidewalks, it is lined with mature trees and large houses constructed of brick having varied facades and roof lines, and garages are not visible.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -1.73. This residential area earned the lowest rating because of its utility poles and overhead wiring, small houses, poor maintenance, and lack of street trees.



Mean Rating: +0.50. Although this image was the second lowest in this category, it is still a positive rating with modest ranch houses complimented by mature trees and sidewalks.

LOWEST

Single-Family Housing: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 11 total images / 7 Kingsport images

Subject Range: rural and suburban houses with a variety of lot sizes

Ratings Range:

High: +3.31 – Suburban houses on very large lots with rolling topography and wooded areas

Low: -1.73 – Neighborhood of small, one-story houses with overhead power lines, poor maintenance, two dead tree trunks, and no street trees.

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(111) "...you've got the little porch on the front, and it looks like lawn chairs to sit. You still have places to park your car, but it's people scale, ...it's not dominated by cars."

(125) "... you've got this feeling of trueness, a small town... it's something that's real."

(125) "One of the things that is kind of interesting is a little rail, it has awnings and porches, peaked roofs."

(112) "...it has a dead chopped off tree trunk. The walkways are not maintained, you've got grass growing over the edge of the sidewalk, dandelions."

Garages

(114) "... big, huge garage, double car garage... the whole thing is a suburban car."

(114) "I don't like large garages in front of houses."

Implications for Planning

- Consider a variety of residential densities.
- The visual impact of garages on streetscapes should be minimized.
- Require or encourage the provision of front porches.
- Include sidewalks with wide planting strips between the sidewalks and curbs, to include street trees.
- Consider requiring underground utilities.
- Require neighborhood parks and green spaces.

Multi-Family Housing: Overview



The introduction of multi-family housing near existing single-family housing is often a controversial issue. A total of 23 images were tested in this VIS category. Since the lowest rating was only a -1.30, no multi-family designs were substantially negative. Highlights include:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Brick as a dominant construction material
- ☒ Varied facade massing with recesses and projections
- ☒ Pitched roofs with dormer windows and chimneys

- ☒ Abundant landscaping and green spaces
- ☒ Buildings fronting onto streetscapes with sidewalks
- ☒ Minimal visual impact from cars and parking

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Repetitious architectural design without varied massing
- ☒ Poorly designed decks
- ☒ Dominance of parking areas adjacent to buildings
- ☒ Limited landscaping

Multi-Family Housing: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +2.88. As the highest rated image in the category, this image has lush landscaping, brick construction, a facade with varied massing, architectural detailing and a pathway.



Mean Rating: +2.36. Features associated with this image's positive ranking include brick construction, facade massing, pitched roofs with chimneys, door awnings and no visible parking.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -1.30. In addition to this building's flat facade that lacks a diversity of massing, the dumpster in the foreground helped earn this image the lowest rating in the category.



Mean Rating: -1.22. Among the negative features of this image are the low-pitched roof lacking any features such as chimneys, an uninspiring facade design, and a lack of landscaping.

LOWEST

Multi-Family Housing: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 23 total images / 15 Kingsport images

Subject Range: townhomes, duplexes, mixed use, urban, suburban, multi-story, attached patio homes, and front-loaded garages

Ratings Range:

High: +2.88 – Traditional style brick building with lushly landscaped courtyard, including mature trees, brick walkways, decorative lighting

Low: -1.30 – Two-story brick building with minimal architectural detailing, facade-mounted utility boxes, sparse landscaping, poorly maintained access drive, and trash dumpster in the foreground

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(132) “It’s green, it’s got brick, the fence isn’t nasty looking, it’s got lamps for night, it’s so visually appealing. The walkway is nice.”

(133) “... it doesn’t appear to let a lot of opportunities for the folks who live there to enjoy their outside space.”

(128) “I like the attractive lighting and the fact that it is lit, and I like the green space, the shaded area. You’ve got a nice winding walkway.”

(131) “I have a real problem with #131... it has this great big brick wall. It looks like the Berlin Wall.”

(143) “...looks like an old building that’s been maintained or renovated. And it could be improved, I think, by adding some plants, trees around there would help that building. It’s like a box right there by itself.”

Parking

(127) “... that’s a good example, you’ve got the parking right there, but yet, ... you’ve still got the green in front.”

(121) “... it’s a solid garage, I mean literally 4-car garages... that’s all you see.”

(121) “That ought to be illegal. I don’t like garage doors on the front.”

Architecture

(129) “It’s got a different architecture.”

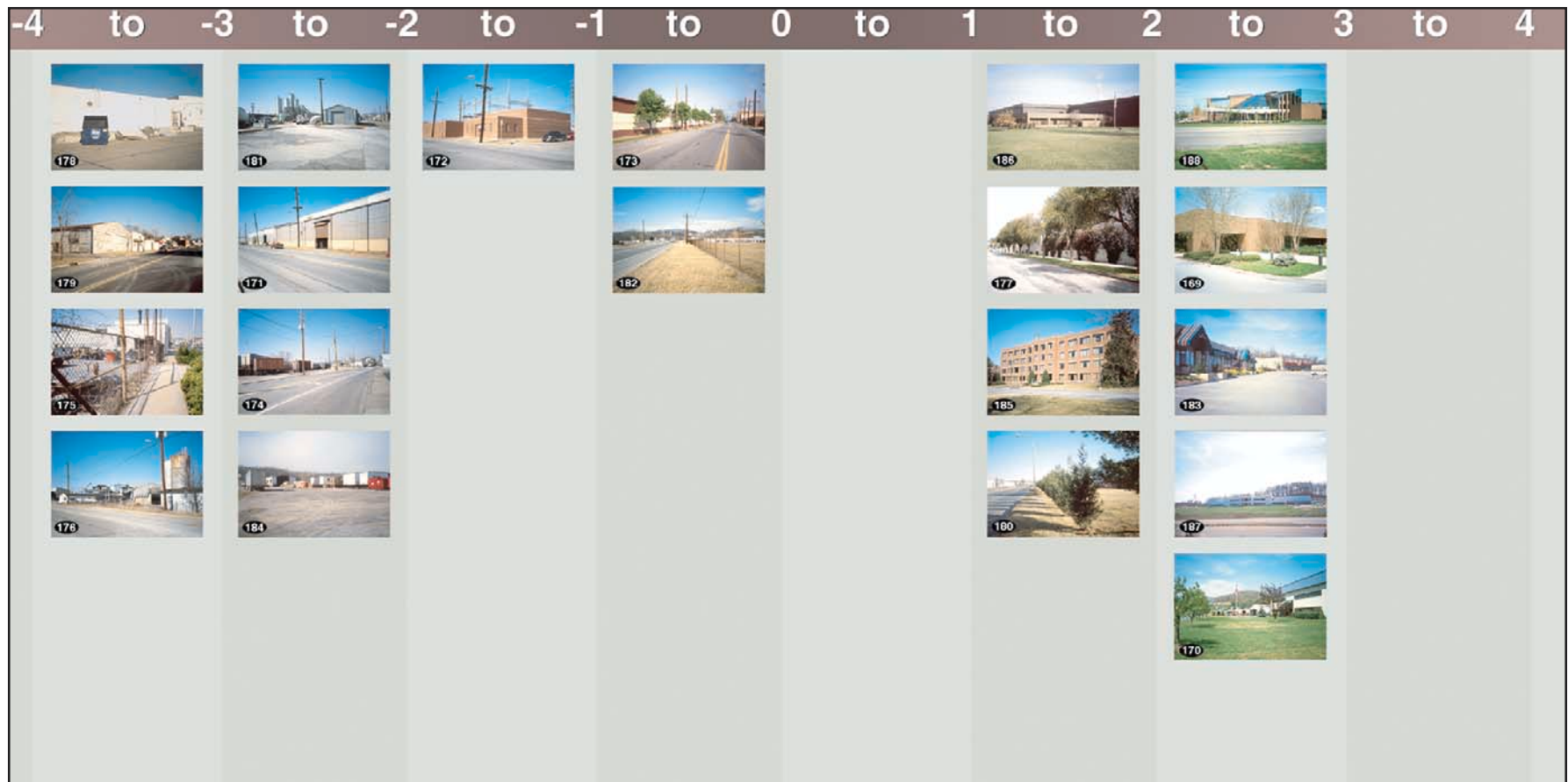
(140) “I think instead of where you just walk up and you walk straight in

the door to have a larger patio and maybe even not an awning, but some type of porch that would invite pulling a chair out and sitting out and it would encourage talking to neighbors and more outside activity.”

Implications for Planning

- Consider brick as a primary building material.
- Require or encourage the provision of front porches.
- Avoid front facades dominated by garages.
- Encourage varied facades and rooflines.
- Include ample landscaping, green spaces and parks.
- Require sidewalks.
- Minimize the visual impact of parking by moving it to the rear and/or providing landscape screening.
- Consider prohibiting or discouraging gated communities.

Industry: Overview



Industry has long been Kingsport's economic base. Although industrial areas are often given little consideration when it comes to aesthetics, many communities are now recognizing the need to make such places both functional and pleasant environments for recruiting and sustaining businesses. Below are key characteristics of industrial development:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Contemporary architectural design
- ☒ Masonry and glass as key building materials
- ☒ Good maintenance of buildings and lawns
- ☒ Landscaping peripheral to the building with usable green space
- ☒ Screened HVAC, dumpsters and loading areas

- ☒ Parking areas buffered with landscaping
- ☒ Sidewalks

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Unattractive buildings designed only for utility
- ☒ Deteriorated buildings and equipment
- ☒ Unscreened loading and truck parking zones
- ☒ Unscreened outdoor storage areas
- ☒ Chain-link fencing
- ☒ Lack of landscaping
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring

Industry: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +2.91. This image was the highest rated in the Industry category. The building's contemporary design using brick and reflective glass is also attractively landscaped.



Mean Rating: +2.76. As this category's second highest rated image, key features include generous landscaping, a contemporary building design, and attractive lighting bollards.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -3.94. This image was the lowest rated image in the category. Problems include the deteriorated appearance of buildings, poles and overhead wiring, and a lack of screening.



Mean Rating: -3.71. Not far above the ranking of image #176, this storage lot exhibits chain-link fencing crowned by barbed wire, as well as highly-visible stored equipment and materials.

LOWEST

Industry: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 20 total images / 19 Kingsport images

Subject Range: single and multi-story facilities, suburban industrial campus, urban warehouses

Ratings Range:

High: +2.91 – A contemporary building of brick and glass construction with well maintained landscaping, including lawns, shrubs and trees

Low: -3.94 – A run-down industrial facility with rusted storage tanks, overhead power lines, and no landscaping or screening

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

(177) “That doesn’t even look like industry, you wouldn’t mind walking by that.”

(183) “Canopies...helps that building. Greenery, trees, no utilities.”

(169) “A strong design[ed] building, but you see the trees, kind of an informal balance, where it’s inviting you in the door... I think it’s pleasant, it’s functional.”

(182) “I don’t like the long line of rusty chain link fence... the overhead power line is not all that attractive.”

(186, 170) “The facilities that have open spaces – there’s space between them and the roadway. Even though it’s just grass... business is back off the street and some of these grungy areas are in the back of it, but it’s not so visible to the public. The work is going on at the business there, but it’s not out in public view.”

(175) “They should be severely fined for a very poorly maintained chain link fence... the sidewalk looks to be in real good shape and there are some shrubs. But you have basically a utility junk yard, looks like with a poorly maintained fence.”

Landscaping

(183) “... they don’t have a lot of space for flowers, but it looks like they’re using all the space that they can there... for color, and that looks nice... kind of breaks up the concrete.”

(173) “they’ve got those nice trees, a good green strip.”

(173) “It’s also well maintained...it looks cared for...and therefore the

community is worth caring about.”

(169) “... you don’t have flat grass, the beds there are kind of rounded, there’s a bit more contour and shape to the landscaping.”

Architecture

(173) “You know a building this big, I don’t care whether you try to call attention to it or not you see it every time you travel those ways, so it just makes sense to try and make it as attractive as you possibly can. It’s an industry... but you can do some things to make it more pleasing in terms of how you view it.”

(185) “... is way too square. Square windows, square.”

(185) “... it doesn’t really invite you into the front door. I mean, there’s nothing drawing your eye to the main entrance. It’s just all the same.”

Implications for Planning

- Encourage attractive building designs
- Utilize architecture that breaks up the massing of large buildings
- Require screening of HVAC and dumpsters
- Locate loading and storage areas to the rear of the property
- Require landscaping
- Parking areas should be screened by landscaping
- Sidewalks should be provided
- Encourage usable green space for employees
- Implement ordinances for maintenance

Vistas: Overview



The topic of “vistas” is clearly a big-picture issue. Vistas, sometimes referred to as “viewsheds,” are large expanses of land that can be readily viewed from a particular vantage point. Below are key features identified in the Vistas category of the VIS:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Preservation of hillsides
- ☒ Design and construction of buildings to compliment existing topography
- ☒ Tunnels as an alternative to altering the natural topography
- ☒ Availability of scenic overlooks

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Excessive road cuts into hillsides
- ☒ Severely altered terrain - by man, not nature
- ☒ Dense and highly-visible development, including on hilltops
- ☒ Utility poles and overhead wiring

Vistas: Highest & Lowest Ratings



217

Mean Rating: +2.56. This image was the highest rated in this category because of the distant views and the general lack of development, particularly on hilltops.



220

Mean Rating: +2.21. Given the dominance of a wide road in this image, it was rated surprisingly high. The use of a tunnel rather than a massive road cut is significant.

HIGHEST



218

Mean Rating: -1.70. This image received the lowest ranking for vistas. Issues conveyed include grading of a hillside, excessive asphalt paving, and utility poles with overhead wiring.



219

Mean Rating: -0.16. As with image #218, this image exhibits the severe grading of a hillside, in addition to extensive asphalt paving in the foreground.

LOWEST

Vistas: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 6 total images / 1 Kingsport image

Subject Range: long-range views of mountains and pastoral valleys, views of urbanized areas, roadways, tunnel, extensive grading

Ratings Range:

High: +2.56 – Vista of wooded mountains and farmland valleys with minimal development

Low: -1.70 – Background with a hillside being excessively graded, and foreground featuring power lines, traffic lights, and a wide roadway intersection

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

General

This issue category was different from the rest in that the ratings in the VIS pertained specifically to the relatively simple concepts illustrated in each image. On the other hand, the supplemental focus group discussions often centered on more complex concepts related to overall growth patterns and the many complicated and intertwined issues that relate. In addition to comments about the images, there was also a desire expressed for overlooks or viewing spots.

(222) “Since I don’t see [this view] that often, I kind of like it.”

(222) “[It] is really pretty at night.”

(217) “I like 217 with the open space versus all of those houses in 221 and 222. I think it’s much more attractive to look out at an open area rather than to look out at an urban jumble, or rather... jungle.”

(218) “I think this is unattractive because of all the traffic lights on wires, plus the overhead power lines on the poles on the right side of the photograph are unattractive.”

(218) “To find more land to build on, we have to chop down a hill or even the side of a hill. That, to me, is one of the most aesthetically unpleasing pictures we’ve seen.”

(219) “... is unattractive because of the large cut-away on the land...”

(220) “There’s a lot of use of tunnels in Germany and Switzerland because they have made a conscious decision to preserve their beautiful landscapes... they have tunneled through mountains and preserved

absolutely spectacular scenery and landscape that we have destroyed here in this country.”

Implications for Planning

- Adopt development policies that encourage clustered development in order to preserve open spaces and vistas.
- Consider limiting the amount of development that can occur on hilltops.
- Create public access to vistas where possible.
- Preserve hills and ridges by building to compliment existing topography.
- Discourage severe grading.
- Encourage tunnels instead of extensive road cuts.

Transit & Mobility: Overview



The Transit and Mobility category included a total of six images in the VIS. In particular, the concepts of buses, bicycle lanes and handicapped mobility were rated. Key characteristics identified in these images, both positive and negative, included the following:

Positive Characteristics

- ☒ Bicycle lanes integrated into existing roadways through paint-stripped designation
- ☒ Conventional fixed-route bus service
- ☒ Special shuttle bus service for the handicapped
- ☒ Ramps for handicapped access

Negative Characteristics

- ☒ Cyclists traveling on streets without bicycle lanes
- ☒ Cyclists traveling through unattractive areas
- ☒ Lack of mobility for handicapped

Transit & Mobility: Highest & Lowest Ratings



Mean Rating: +2.52. Although this bike lane is not seamlessly integrated into the roadway, as evidenced by the paving changes, it received the highest rating based merely on its existence.



Mean Rating: +1.78. This image was the second highest in this category. It ranked slightly above the image of a conventional bus, revealing a greater public concern for the access challenged.

HIGHEST



Mean Rating: -0.92. Although the two lowest rated images in this category were of cyclists without bike lanes, this one exhibiting the dangers to children caused the greatest concern.



Mean Rating: -0.12. In addition to the issue of a cyclist without bike lanes, another contributing factor to the low rating was the unattractive overall appearance of this industrial area.

LOWEST

Transit & Mobility: Detailed Analysis

Summary of Images Evaluated

Number & Origin: 6 total images / 5 Kingsport images

Subject Range: bicycles with and without bike lanes, conventional buses, handicap shuttle buses, handicapped scooter

Ratings Range:

High: +2.52 – 5-lane highway with a designated bike lane, parking lane, and a sidewalk separated from the curb by a grassy strip.

Low: -0.92 – Children riding bikes on a busy road without bike lanes.

Key VIS Focus Group Comments

The following comments note the specific image discussed in parenthesis:

Handicapped Mobility

(148) “If that was my Mama, I’d want my Mama on the sidewalk.”

Bicycling

(147) “I’m real impressed with #147 to have a bike walk.”

(147) “147 is planned and structured, more attractive, more landscaping. The roads are in good condition.”

(147) “... we’ve got such wide streets in this area – use some of that space for bikes – it doesn’t all have to go to cars.”

(147) “It’s got sidewalks, got green space between the street and sidewalk, it’s got a bike lane – looks like two lanes.”

(147) “It’s marked well...the lines are very distinctive and noticeable.”

(147) “I like the idea of the bike thing, but I would like to have the bike part... not quite so close to the road... It would be safer to move it over on the other side of the parking.”

(145, 149) “...would you really want to be riding your bike down something like 145 or 149? Especially the way some people drive.”

(145) “... there are not lines in the road. I wouldn’t know which way is the right way or whatever.”

(145) “... highway markings are very important... I don’t know if that fellow’s in the middle of the road or not.”

Mass Transit

(144) “... you’re trying to encourage people to use mass transit, but that sure isn’t very inviting, you’ve got concrete, no green.”

(144) “... they do have a bench for them to sit down, but there’s no

shelter if it were raining.”

(146) “I think that probably rated positive due to the fact that you do have a transit system that can accommodate wheel chairs, handicapped, etc. However, look at the street and the sidewalk – it’s not easy to navigate over that hump.”

Implications for Planning

- Integrate bicycle lanes into existing roadways where feasible, to include clearly legible road markings and signage.
- Provide fixed-route bus service with functional, comfortable and attractive bus stops
- Offer or expand transportation services for handicapped.
- Require sidewalk ramps.

Conclusions

Regardless of how the City of Kingsport elects to use the results of the VIS and supplemental focus groups, the following key points should be kept in mind:

- *The VIS was conducted in a systematic and thorough manner using a well-researched and carefully applied methodology.*
- *The VIS entailed the input of over 1,000 Kingsport citizens representing a diverse range of ages, ethnicities, economic levels and other characteristics.*
- *The demographics of the VIS participants were closely representative of the Kingsport community.*
- *The results of the VIS and supplemental focus groups offer a consensus vision on what Kingsport might become in the future.*
- *Many of these themes have been echoed in Kingsport's numerous past visioning efforts.*
- *The planning and code recommendations will take the VIS results into consideration, but will also balance those concepts with economic, fiscal, and environmental realities.*